

2013

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### Recommended Citation

Kalina, Amber (2013) "Confined Identity: Reexamining Total Institutions," *Augsburg Honors Review*. Vol. 6 , Article 15.

Available at: [https://idun.augsburg.edu/honors\\_review/vol6/iss1/15](https://idun.augsburg.edu/honors_review/vol6/iss1/15)

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# CONFINED IDENTITY: REEXAMINING TOTAL INSTITUTIONS

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**A**BSTRACT: Social life has great impact on the identity formation of groups and individuals. It is from society that people receive validation for the identities they wish to convey. Typically, individuals have freedom to adopt multiple identities, for different social contexts demand different behaviors. However, there are some places where individuals are restricted to one common identity by authorities. Erving Goffman defines such a location as a total institution. Although Goffman's theory adequately describes the circumstances in the asylum he observed, it is not as applicable to other cases that should theoretically match Goffman's description. This article will address the problem of inapplicability through a theory elaboration of Goffman's definition of total institutions. For this elaboration, two different cases that apply to Goffman's five types of total institutions will be examined: Navy SEAL training and the Amish lifestyle. These analyses will demonstrate where the theory is lacking. After the weak spots are found, improvements to the theory can be made.

### Introduction

The average human being fluctuates between different presentations of self in a day. How one behaves shifts based on factors such as location, who one is surrounded by, and the various social rules that are in place. Individuals adhere to the varying demands of their changing social environments by fulfilling role requirements – behaviors and appearances that comply with society's expectations for a role (Hewitt & Shulman 2011). Sometimes identities layer on top of one another at the same time, but humans must often separate their identities to meet variant expectations of their environments. From a sociological perspective, it is apparent through observation of everyday social interactions that who one is alters as one enters different social and physical environments (Lemert & Branaman 1997c). However, humans do not always have the freedom to roam to different places; sometimes they are trapped together in one location under the strict supervision of higher ranking authorities. As a result, they become recognized by one identity with specific role requirements. In his book *Asylums*, Erving Goffman (1961) describes the tearing down of individualism and building up of common social identities in constrained environments – which he calls “total institutions.” He compares these institutions to machines; new inmates are “fed into the administrative machinery of the establishment, to be worked on smoothly by routine operations” (16). As the title of his book indicates, Goffman's theory arose primarily from observations he made around 1955 in St. Elizabeths Hospital, a psychiatric institution in Washington D.C.

Although Goffman's theory of total institutions provides a thorough inspection of the identity-altering processes that occur in rigid physical and social environments, some sociologists have found the theory to be unnecessarily limited in application. The main reason the theory is limited revolves around Goffman imbuing his theory with a value judgment of how humans should or should not be treated. One sociologist states that *Asylums* makes “movingly clear” that Goffman possesses “concern with the preservation of human dignity” (Schudson 1984: 646). This is not the purpose of sociological endeavors; sociological research should explore, explain, or describe social phenomena, not judge it (Babbie 2010). When a social theory fails to accurately explain its intended social phenomenon, the theory must be altered. This is the case with Goffman's theory.

To demonstrate where Goffman's theory is lacking, a theory elaboration will be completed. This process includes analyzing cases through the lens of total institutions to find where improvements to the theory can be made. Two drastically different cases will be examined for this elaboration: Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training and the general Amish lifestyle. BUD/S is an intensive, six-month military training program that transforms men into elite warriors,

while the Amish lifestyle is a highly structured way of life that is meant to make the Amish distinct from their “English” neighbors. Both of these institutions fall into the five types of total institutions Goffman identifies in his work. After these analyses, modifications to the theory will be proposed. This process will allow the theory to more accurately answer the issue it is meant to address: how identity changes in confined physical and social environments. Before any changes can be made, one must first understand Goffman’s theory as it currently stands.

### **Confined: An Introduction to Total Institutions**

In *Asylums*, Goffman uses the term total institution to convey the institution’s control over all areas of an individual’s life. Near the beginning of his book, Goffman provides an overview of what individuals experience in a total institution. Physical boundaries, usually marked by walls or fences, provide the space in which individuals accomplish daily activities. One completes activities with a near constant group of institutionalized others who are assigned the same tasks. Activities are supervised, scheduled, and enforced by an institution’s authorities. Activities are also determined and organized in such ways as to “fulfill the official aims of the institution” (1961: 6).

The main consequence of being confined in a total institution is an alteration of identity. “[Any] environment that so totally encloses its members – physically, spatially, temporally and culturally – has the power to rewrite their identities without challenge” (Scott 2011:20). The term Goffman uses to describe one’s transformation in an institution is mortification of the self (1961). To mortify the self is to humiliate an identity until it weakens or fractures. To provide illustration, Goffman equates total institutions with machines; they force individuals into identical molds to create replicas of one idealized person.

The process of mortification begins by removing an individual from his or her identity-affirming social environments. This step is known as role displacement (Goffman 1961). Individuals enter total institutions bearing multiple past identities. On the outside, individuals receive validation from those who accept their identities as accurate representations of their true selves (1997a). However, they do not receive validation for these identities within the institution. The audience in an institution consists of authorities – who will only support the identity they want inmates to have – and fellow inmates – who are under the same pressure to conform to the identity.

After entering an institution, individuals go through a process Goffman calls trimming – where they endure multiple initiation rituals that systematically strip them of self-identifying objects (Goffman 1961). First, one supplies the authorities of the institution with one’s records; this allows the individual to be “fed



into the administrative machinery of the establishment” (1961: 16). Second, authorities replace individuals’ full names with numbers, titles, only one of their names, or a combination of title and first or last name. For example, a man named John Smith who goes to jail may be called inmate 200412. The institution removes one’s full name to demonstrate control over who an individual is. Third, one relinquishes personal objects that label him or her as an individual. These objects include clothing, accessories, other material belongings, and sometimes hair – any “physical evidence” of individuality (Dyer 1985). Authorities provide replacement clothing and objects; all those institutionalized receive the same articles. By the end of trimming, all inmates have the same resources and are homogenous in appearance.

Once an institution thoroughly dismantles an individual’s identity kit – which physically demonstrates his or her removal from previous identities – an individual must acclimate him or herself to the workings and expectations of the institution. The individual accomplishes this through what Goffman calls primary adjustments. Essentially, primary adjustments occur as individuals conform to the shape of an institution’s mold for self (1961). Pressure from authorities quickly propels individuals to make these adjustments.

Inmates soon learn that they have lost control of their bodies and voices along with their appearances. They must adopt degrading physical postures – such as standing at attention – when authorities enter the room. They must speak deferentially and humbly when they talk to and make requests of authorities. Further degradation arises when an inmate does not receive positive demeanor in return for his or her actions (Goffman 1961). This communicates to inmates that they rank below those who work for the machine. People who have comparatively lower statuses than others have to obey those with the higher statuses.

Inmates also lose freedom to control what they do during the day and how they do it. Outside of an institution, one has freedom to play or dine or rest at his or her leisure. Authorities structure days inside an institution (Goffman 1961). Strict procedures for how actions are to be completed are also implemented. Structured days and procedures prevent inmates from being fully conscious of what they are doing (Dyer 1985); autonomy is the enemy of a total institution because it cannot be observed unless vocalized or acted on. Thus, authorities vigilantly search for outlying comments and actions from inmates. When an inmate’s actions do not conform, he or she is severely punished.

Punishment shows the disregard total institutions have for inmates’ territories of self (Lemert & Branaman 1997b: 45). Just as geographical territories divide portions of land, territories of self create boundaries between an individual and his or her physical and social surroundings. They include “external, easily visible, defendable boundaries for a special claim” (1997b: 48), such as offices or houses,

and personal space. Individuals use territories to maintain space around themselves and their belongings. When one establishes territories, one expects others to respect these territories or face consequences. In total institutions, authorities remove these personal boundaries. "[The] boundary that the individual places between his being and the environment is invaded and the embodiments of self profaned" (Goffman 1961: 23). Along with this arises what Goffman calls looping (1961: 35). In this scenario, an individual's defensive response to an attack on the self becomes the next target of assault. For example, one who raises his hands to defend against being hit may next be harassed for acting "cowardly."

Invasion of territories leads to both social and physical contaminative exposure. One becomes socially contaminated when he or she must interact with people who ranked below him or her in the outside world. Moreover, the individual who once ranked higher cannot command those who once ranked lower; all inmates are the same in the eyes of authorities. Contaminative exposure of the body happens when inmates must reveal their bodies in normally unacceptable ways. Having to be naked in front of authorities is one example. Physical contaminative exposure also happens through being constantly in view of others (Goffman 1961). From such invasion of self and contaminative exposure, an institutionalized person realizes that there is nowhere to hide. This makes an inmate feel vulnerable (Dyer 1985), as if the only way to be safe is to conform to the identity of the institution.

These primary adjustments firmly socialize an individual into the identity of the institution. However, an inmate will typically not remain a perfect replica. As an individual becomes accustomed to the routine of institutionalized life, he or she will find ways to undermine the institution through employing "unauthorized means" of getting objects or obtaining "unauthorized ends, or both" (1961: 189). Goffman calls this active defiance a secondary adjustment. One can also understand this phenomenon as role distancing; the individual puts space between him or herself and the expectations of or identifying with the role (Lemert and Berman 1997c).

Total institutions are machines that change the identities of individuals. They accept people with variant statuses, races, interests, and ideologies. Such characteristics do not concern institutions as long as they do not inhibit an individual from changing. The institution cares about what people can become, not so much about how people are when they enter. Old selves that differ are replaced by new selves that are joined by shared experiences and roles. Total institutions can be as small as retreat or rehabilitation centers and as massive as prisons. They can choose to exert just enough control to keep one on track with a program or exercise full dominance over conduct. The degree to which an institution alters individuals and gets them to maintain the molded identity depends on time spent institutionalized and how intense control is. Now that the identity-altering processes of total institu-

tions have been identified, the two cases – BUD/S training and the Amish – can be examined to determine how well the theory explains these institutions.

### **Voluntary Torment: BUD/S as a Total Institution**

BUD/S meets the criteria Goffman sets in the beginning of his book. The physical boundaries are provided by the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado, California. All of the trainees' needs are met on this base in the company of their comrades. Candidates receive food from a dining hall or are given MRE – Meal Ready to Eat – packets. Military doctors are on location to ensure medical problems are taken care of within the confines of the facility. On weekdays, trainees sleep in barracks. This places candidates under the scrutiny of instructors both day and night. The days at BUD/S are also highly structured by the domineering and demanding instructors (Gordon 2002). All of these courses of actions are taken to fulfill the goal of the institution – which is to create SEALs.

One can identify the process of mortification of self at work as candidates go through the painful training. The purpose of BUD/S is to “break [men] down physically and mentally and rebuild [them] – solid, focused, and more confident – with a strong sense of inner and outer strength and devotion to the team” (Bahmanyar & Osman 2008: 32). Instructors make trainees painfully aware that becoming a SEAL is no easy task. Candidates must endure brutal conditions that push their physical and mental limits to the extreme. The third week of training – Hell Week – can be viewed as the time that tears down one's identity the most. Candidates receive about four hours of sleep from Sunday night to Saturday morning (2008). This means candidates are with instructors essentially twenty-four hours a day. During Hell Week, one is “always tired, always wet, and always cold” (Bahmanyar & Osman 2008: 49). One example of the exercises completed in Hell Week is surf torture – where candidates hook arms and lay in the ocean for minutes, run onto the beach for exercises, and run back into the water (Gordon 2002). By Thursday, candidates act on instinct. Their sleep deprived minds and bodies follow commands without questioning. Even surf torture becomes just another task. According to one instructor, “Get to this point and nobody's going to quit; they'll stay here and they'll die if we let them” (Gordon 2002). Once one completes Hell Week, the likelihood of dropping on request dissipates. Candidates must make primary adjustments during this time to conform to the institution. The following months rebuild the identity.

Despite the very close parallels made between BUD/S and Goffman's conception of total institutions, there are four areas where the theory does not accurately describe BUD/S training. First, candidates are allowed to go home on some weekends during training (Gordon 2002). This strays from Goffman's idea that all

activities occur within the physical confines of an institution. It is interesting to note that this period away from the institution does not stop a candidate from having his identity changed. The period away from BUD/S causes one to consider if he really wants to become a SEAL. This will weaken the resolve of some – who will eventually quit – but strengthen the desire of others.

Second, candidates are able to quit BUD/S whenever they wish (Gordon 2002). The Navy does not mandate that men have to stay in training, for not everyone has the physical and mental capabilities to become a SEAL. In his theory, Goffman describes the mortification of self process as tearing down one's identity. After this, the institution imposes a new identity on the inmate. Yet, this is not the case in BUD/S: a man must want to be changed, and the institution cannot hold him if he chooses to leave. This is even different from other military basic training programs. BUD/S asks a man to mortify himself by submitting to the control of instructors. This does not mean that the institution loses power, for BUD/S training remains the sole means of becoming a SEAL. Instead, BUD/S demands complete devotion from candidates, and candidates have to comply if they want the title.

Third, Goffman's theory does not account for the fact that officers train with enlisted men in BUD/S (Greitens 2011). This counts as contaminative exposure in the theory of total institutions. However, officers are put in charge of boat crews, which allows them to maintain a higher status than enlisted men. All the same, officers have to gain the respect of their boat crews if they are to lead. This bridges the gap between Goffman's definition of contaminative exposure and what happens in BUD/S.

Finally, secondary adjustments rarely occur during training. This is due to attention to detail. Most evolutions have specific procedures that must be adhered to exactly in order to pass BUD/S. Authorities punish candidates or lower their test scores for divergent behavior. A man may be able to employ unconventional means of achieving tasks once he becomes a SEAL. As a SEAL candidate, however, the space to disobey is very limited.

From analyzing this case, the theory of total institutions already shows some obvious shortfalls in describing the identity-altering process in total institutions. The next case presents a community where the breakdown of identity is not as apparent due to the lack of physical or mental harm an individual encounters. However, using this case will demonstrate where the theory can still be altered to better represent this social process.

### **Plain and Simple: the Amish Lifestyle as a Total Institution**

The Amish community is not the typical total institution that Goffman writes of in *Asylums*. An Amish community is a loose gathering of families that

live within close proximity to one another and join together every other Sunday for worship. These families are not direct neighbors, but live interspersed with English families (Hostetler 1993). Most Amish prefer to live in close proximity to one another; when one lives an isolated life from modern society, one likes to be around people who agree and understand him or her. Thus, the Amish community lacks the strict physical boundaries Goffman promotes in his theory. The Amish complete activities with fellow Amish and with outsiders, hence they are also not limited in their everyday interactions – although they may prefer to be (Alleway 2012). Families can choose what they do during the day, which demonstrates lack of strict scheduling. There is also no ultimate authority in the community; members monitor and make community decisions with one another (Hostetler 1993). Despite these deviations from Goffman's definition, the Amish community does accurately reflect the theory of total institutions in some very important ways.

For those raised within the community, the Amish lifestyle is the only one they know. They do not leave previous identities to become members of the church; their identities are attached to the tradition from birth. Children experience primary socialization after birth by learning the *Ordnung* – the rules for how to live an Amish life – from the words and actions of their parents. Children work alongside their parents to understand how to complete tasks the Amish way (Tait 2009). The Amish culture prepares itself to be carried into future generations by training its children. Thus, the process of officially becoming Amish for these individuals may be seen more as an affirmation of their coinciding beliefs with the Amish church rather than being forced to give up who they once were. The process of role distancing is executed in the sense that members of the church are barred from adopting other identities.

Amish identity is further engrained through the trimming process. Objects are not taken away from the Amish, for they never possessed them. Yet, those who are socialized into the Amish community, whether as children or adults, are still fed into the total institution machine – where individuals are placed in the common mold of the Amish lifestyle. This is done through allowing individuals to possess only the resources that support an Amish identity. For example, those in Amish communities wear the same clothes and have the same hairstyles. Distinguishing baubles like jewelry are prohibited. Physical appearance is an easy way to distinguish the group from outsiders (Hostetler 1993). Common identity is also demonstrated through speaking Pennsylvania Dutch, a language that outsiders do not understand (1993). Thus, one's identity centers on a group of individuals who are in the same situation as one.

Interestingly, individuals do not only become Amish from birth; some individuals choose to join the Amish from the outside. The lifestyle serves as a natural way of existing for those born into the community, while those who come



into the tradition from the outside have different experiences. Outsiders who enter must go through role displacement and trimming in the full sense to lose their former identities. They must give up their old possessions – such as clothing and electronics. They must disregard their old lifestyles and adhere to the rules of the church. This process may be considered mortifying for some, as the Amish lifestyle limits freedoms that many on the outside take for granted. However, the process is not meant to make the individual feel degraded; it is meant to teach them to live how God wants them to live. Primary adjustments are essential for an individual coming in from the outside to become acclimated with the expectations of and adhere to his or her new identity. Goffman's theory more accurately describes this situation than the socialization of those who are born into the tradition.

Whether raised within or outside the community, one witnesses how powerful the Amish institution is by the punishment implemented when members do not obey. Members cannot be selective about which rules they do and do not observe; they must observe all rules to be considered Amish (Hostetler 1993). Those who do not comply with the *Ordnung* – the rules of the community – are expelled from the group (Wagner 2001, Hostetler 1993). Whether the separation is short or permanent is determined by how quickly the individual repents.

What makes the Amish lifestyle markedly different from the current conception of total institutions is its lack of degradation. Mortification of the self is not apparent as one is socialized into Amish society. The Amish do not consider the conditions they live in to be humiliating. Rather, the ways their lives are structured allow them to be humble and live simply (Wagner 2001). Territories of self are not invaded through humiliating physical postures and vocalizations, and individuals have room to dictate their own actions. Baptism is a choice, and remaining in the Amish community is also a choice (Stevick 2007). Furthermore, territories are respected because Amish families do not invade one another's personal spaces (Alleway 2012). Members are allowed to have personal belongings as long as they comply with the *Ordnung*. Even if one possesses "contraband," the objects will not be forcibly taken; members know the consequences if they are caught with worldly objects (Hostetler 1993). A final way humiliation is diminished is through how leaders act. Bishops and elders do not force members to treat them deferentially. Instead, all members – including those in respected positions – are expected to act with humility and within the rules of the *Ordnung* (Hostetler 1993). This follows the emphasis Amish place on living God-centered lives.

Because families possess autonomy, they are able to schedule their lives based on what their goals are for the day (Alleway 2012). This gives members a considerable amount of freedom in comparison to other total institutions Goffman specifies in *Asylums*. Yet, Amish have stricter time constraints than those in mainstream society because they are not allowed to use electric lights or other modern

conveniences (2012). Thus, they must structure their days to allow ample time to complete their activities. A typical day will start early in the morning as the sun rises and end when the sun sets (2012). This allows the Amish to use the sun's natural light to complete tasks.

Contaminative social and physical exposure also does not happen from being in an Amish community. The Amish do not expose their bodies in disgraceful ways, for they believe in keeping themselves covered (Wagner 2001). This is apparent through their modest and loose-fitting clothing. Tainting social exposure does not occur because individuals rank the same as one another – minus bishops and elders. The only time one may witness public disgrace is when he or she is shunned or excommunicated (Hostetler 1993).

In the midst of a strict Amish lifestyle, *rumspringa* stands out as a drastic deviation from everyday life. *Rumspringa* is a Pennsylvania Dutch term which means “running around” (Shachtman 2006: 10). Teenagers have freedom to break the rules – to experience life on the outside (2006). At a first glance, this may appear to be a secondary adjustment. However, there are three reasons why *rumspringa* does not fall under this term. First, the teenagers who run around are not yet baptized members of the church; *rumspringa* starts when one is sixteen and ends at about the age of eighteen when the teenager decides to be baptized (2006). The *Ordnung* can only be violated by those who are officially Amish through baptism (Hostetler 1993). Second, Amish communities allow their children to partake in *rumspringa*; it is not an underground activity that is purposefully meant to undermine the rules (Shachtman 2006). Third, “running around” is considered to be an important step in making the final commitment to the Amish church; the church wants knowledgeable believers who consent to the *Ordnung* of their own free will (Stevick 2007). Thus, *rumspringa* may be viewed as part of primary adjustments – or socialization.

Many parallels can be drawn between the Amish community and Goffman's theory of total institutions. The Amish lifestyle includes definite, dominating rules to live by, but it is not as strict or harsh as most institutions in Goffman's portrayal. The discrepancies between total institutions and the cases indicate places where Goffman's theory must be adjusted. To further support why this is so, a comparison of the cases must be made. Only then can the holes in the theory be clearly defined and fixed.

### Theory Elaboration

From examining how well the theory of total institutions explains BUD/S training and the Amish community, one locates where Goffman's theory accurately explains the processes in a total institution, is in need of improvement, or necessi-

tates complete revision. These places must be examined and the theory altered for it to more accurately explain the social implications that confining physical and social environments have for the identities of individuals.

Goffman appears to be describing a cataclysmic event as he explains how individuals' identities change when they enter such environments. The processes defined in *Asylums* are horrific; they cause one to shiver at the thought of being forced to adopt an identity against his or her will. Because Goffman used an asylum as his main location of study, it follows that he utilizes negative language to describe the events that occurred in the environment. For instance, Goffman calls the process by which individuals are systematically deprived of identities and socialized into new ones "mortification of the self." This language works for institutions that humiliate unwilling inmates into submission, but it does not accurately describe scenarios where individuals do not experience negativity as they are socialized into new identities. For instance, children in Amish communities are not mortified to make them conform to the *Ordnung*. Negative language also makes three implications. First, such language carries with it the underlying notion that the things it is called to represent are negative. Thus, the processes, themselves, that occur in a total institution become negative. As is visible with BUD/S training, the processes can have honorable outcomes. Second, negative language implies that the methods of socialization that total institutions utilize are not acceptable means of changing people. Finally, terms like "mortification of self" cause one to believe that identities are stripped from unwilling participants in the group. However, there are many institutions that people willingly enter in order to change. Thus, the language creates another incorrect image.

Alteration of identity is not as an extreme or negative process as *Asylums* makes it appear – even though it can be in institutions like asylums and BUD/S training. This is apparent when one examines socialization into the Amish lifestyle. The Amish consist of two types of people: those who are born and raised in the community and those who join from the outside. If one enters the Amish community from the outside, the process he or she goes through will more accurately resemble Goffman's original theory – especially when considering role displacement, trimming, and making primary adjustments. Meanwhile, those who are born in the Amish community are not likely to notice changes in their identities; an Amish identity has been their master status since birth. In other words, their identity is resistant to change. This distinction between the two types of people who are socialized into the Amish tradition forces one to consider that what serves as a mundane way of life for some functions as a "total institution" experience for others. The lifestyle is just as pervasive for those in both situations, but the feeling is different. Goffman's use of negative language forces one to view total institutions only in a degrading sense, not as an environment one can be born into. Removing negative



language from Goffman's theory may diminish the gravity of the identity-altering process that happens in institutions like asylums. Yet, doing so will also broaden the applicability of the theory of total institutions.

With this in mind, there are multiple terms that Goffman uses that must be altered. Mortification should be changed to modification. This neutral term connotes that change in identity occurs, but the change is not necessarily negative. As stated above, not all groups humiliate their members to get them to conform. The Amish community does not invade territories of self or utilize degrading postures as regular means of control. Yet, the *Ordnung* maintains power so members can show devotion to God. When a group does humiliate, some persons still choose to conform even if they have the opportunity to leave. This is the case with SEAL candidates, who voluntarily endure torture to attain the status they desire. Their old identities are not forcibly taken, but are disregarded in favor of a higher identity. The term modification acknowledges this deliberately accepted change.

Social contaminative exposure is another term that must be redefined in order to allow Goffman's theory to accurately describe what occurs in total institutions. The term realistically applies only to those who had higher power on the outside of an institution who are forced to be with individuals who were once below them. This does not work for places like Amish communities, where members are raised as equals and treat each other as such. The theory must instead state that individuals may encounter those with whom they do not normally associate. This opens the term up to apply to both those who possessed lower and those who maintained higher ranks on the outside. A name for this concept is social merging – those of diverse backgrounds meld into one identity. Individuals who are socialized into the Amish community from the outside are introduced to a new group of people and learn to live as one of them. SEAL candidates go to BUD/S with the intention of gaining the same identity. Both types of individuals step into new situations with different people surrounding them, and they merge together with these others into their new identities.

The term "trimming" also needs to be altered, although it is not a negative term. This is important because the trimming process does not only entail losing artifacts that make one an individual. Rather, trimming may be understood as the process by which individuals become shaped to the mold of the environment. This definition frees the term to refer to both subtractions and additions to identity. With this definition, a better term to use instead of trimming is "equalizing." Changing both the term and definition allows the process to remain applicable to institutions like BUD/S training – where men have their possessions, names, and hair taken away and are given standard issue replacements (Gordon 2002) – while also broadening its application to cover the Amish community. Those in the Amish community, from when they are young and extending beyond when they are bap-

tized members of the church, are only given the means to support their distinctive identity (Wagner 2001).

Because Goffman observed an asylum, his theory is also imbued with the notion that days and members in encompassing physical and social environments are strictly dominated by authorities. One who observes BUD/S training will find this idea is not too exaggerated for those in a military institution. Dominion of authorities is characteristic to many total institutions as Goffman understands them, but institutions will vary by what degree authorities are in control. Daily Amish life is certainly less structured than BUD/S training. The Amish are still very much governed by the *Ordnung* – the authority they live by. Yet, their days are not structured by the hour. Instead, the rules act as overarching codes of conduct; one can do what he or she pleases as long as the action does not violate any rule. Therefore, it will serve Goffman's theory to make the theory acknowledge that encompassing environments do not need to completely structure one's daily activities to maintain power.

Another aspect that one derives from looking at asylums is that total institutions are separated from mainstream society by strict physical boundaries, such as walls. Goffman's theory focuses on how the identities of individuals change as individuals enter contained environments. However, as with the Amish, entering a different culture or lifestyle can change one's identity in a similar way. Strict physical boundaries are not necessary, for social expectations serve just as well to separate groups from one another. There are usually physical boundaries still present, but they are less defined. Thus, one realizes how a total institution is not necessarily a location; it can also be a culture or a lifestyle. To broaden the application of the total institution theory, social restrictions must be emphasized more than physical boundaries. Without social expectations, being within the confines of the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado, California would do nothing to SEAL candidates. The Amish would not maintain their distinction from mainstream society if they did not have the *Ordnung*. A confined area makes control easier, but it is not completely necessary.

For the sake of maintaining the usefulness of Goffman's theory, some aspects of the theory should not be altered. Although it is beneficial to identify that there are instances when individuals are raised within an institution, the theory should maintain its focus on individuals who enter the new environment. Goffman wants to convey how identity changes, not how individuals experience primary socialization when they are children. Another aspect that should remain the same is making primary adjustments. Individuals must acclimate themselves to the expectations of the institution if they are to remain part of it. This is true for both institutions that utilize humiliation to gain conformity and those that do not. Also, total institutions can still be compared with machines that create like-minded, sim-

ilar-behaving replicas of one identity. This is accomplished thanks to the rules that encompassing social and physical environments have for their members.

The above alterations to the total institution theory broaden the theory's application to physical and social environments that are not expressed to be total institutions in Goffman's essays. Main premises in the theory – socialization of individuals into a new identity and making primary adjustments – have been kept to maintain the theory's purpose of relating how identities change when they are charged with new expectations. The machine analogy has also remained intact to demonstrate that the rules of institutions cover all members. Negative language has been sufficiently altered so that not all total institutions will be viewed as inherently harmful. The idea that total institutions strictly structure individual's lives has been altered to allow that overarching rules for conduct can be just as controlling as hour-by-hour schedules. Also, emphasis for what defines a total institution environment has been shifted from physical boundaries to social restrictions; this makes the theory explain cultures and not just environments enclosed by four walls. With the theory of total institutions broadened with these modifications, the theory can now accurately describe what happens in BUD/S training, the Amish community, and other cases not specified.

### **Conclusion**

Goffman's theory of total institutions provides a glimpse at what happens to an individual's identity when he or she enters a new, constricting environment. In his original theory, Goffman makes the process appear negative and horrifying. One sees an example of this by examining institutions like Navy SEAL training. However, one is not guaranteed to have a negative experience in a total institution. The Amish community portrays many aspects that comply with Goffman's original theory, even when it does not utilize mortifying practices to make individuals conform to the identity. From analyzing both of these cases, revisions of the theory were able to be proposed. Many of the negative terms have been replaced by neutral ones to make the processes in encasing environments not appear negative. Also, the alterations loosen the physical boundaries and strict scheduling to make the theory more widely applicable. Some of Goffman's ideas must remain intact – such as applying the theory to individuals that experience change in their identities, primary adjustments, and the machine metaphor; this keeps the theory focused on explaining the specific phenomenon of altering identities in encasing environments. The theory of total institutions was once frightening; it demonstrated how one's identity can be forcibly manipulated against one's will. After making changes, one can now be assured this is not the case in all encasing physical and social environments. Total institutions are powerful, but they are not inherently bad. Changed identity can be considered a good outcome from time spent in a total institution. It all depends on the perspective of the one who enters them.

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